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World-Herald Weaves Credible Fantasy Around Riverfront

On July 28 Magistrate Richard Kopf issued his advisory opinion against the plaintiffs (PROUD, et al.), which will be forwarded to U.S. District Judge Warren Urbom for final ruling. PROUD is expected to appeal.

The author is a member of PROUD, Inc., and a former member of Landmarks, Inc.

by Isabel Cohen

The World-Herald's coverage of the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan over the last year has been a masterpiece of credible fantasy perpetrated on the people of Omaha to shatter any lingering resistance to the omnipotence of Charles "Mike" Harper.

A federal lawsuit brought by PROUD, et. al., as plaintiffs and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States, as Intervenor against ConAgra, the City of Omaha, Douglas County, the Omaha Development Foundation, the Interstate Commerce Commission, et. al., defendants, began on Monday, July 11, 1988.

The court has scheduled trial on two limited issues: first, whether based on the Riverfront redevelopment Plan and Agreement, there is any federal funding, licensing, or other federal

involvement requiring compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or otherwise implicating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or the Land and Water Conservation Act (LWCA); and second, if there is such federal involvement, whether compliance with Section 106, NEPA or the LWCA could result in the federally-required retention of one or more of the buildings in the Jobbers' Canyon Historic District.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs intended to show that there has indeed been a great deal of federal involvement in many different phases of the plan, and that a review is necessary. If they could have persuaded the judge and a review is ordered, then all demolition of Jobbers Canyon would have to cease while the review is being done. Because the demolition is under way and the buildings are coming down, speed is of the

essence. Thus the reason for the limited lawsuit, instead of the full scale one, and the reason it was being tried before a magistrate in Omaha instead of Judge Urbom in Lincoln.

Since March 25 there have been 216 pleadings on the plaintiffs' behalf. Not a small amount of attorney work. Steve Achelpohl, a local attorney hired by the National Trust, and Betsy Merritt from the National Historic Trust in Washington, D.C., have logged in an incredible number of hours--not to mention Ed Fogarty and Dorothy Tubach, working for Proud et. al. Such people of conviction have tried to preserve an undeviating vision of the future of Omaha.

A World-Herald headline Tuesday, July 12, 1988, "Shukert calls Riverfront Plan Best Option" was completely untrue. Jones had nothing to do with the lawsuit! This is the way the World-Herald covered all a controversy.

based on a federal law that says any development using federal money or requiring a federal permit should be reviewed by the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation if the development would harm property designated as historic. The Magistrate pointed out this irrelevancy.

Tom Peters, Controller for ConAgra, Inc., testified delays have cost \$10 million so far. Harper alleged the plaintiffs attorneys were only in this suit for the money and that it was "frivolous." The attorneys for the plaintiffs would have been paid only if they had won, unlike the

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Letters from the Editors

By Jim Leatherwood

Once again, gentle readers, through the unflagging dedication, the tireless efforts, the unceasing endeavors of the WHAMO staff, you have access to the news and views that the World-Herald has missed or neglected.

This month, WHAMO is brought to you by fresh voices. We may not be as sophisticated as Ms. Mendenhall, or as experienced, or as knowledgeable, but we are as interested in presenting some of the issues that our favorite daily often ignores.

A word of warning: Since Frances has decided (rightfully so) to cede

control to person or persons not actively engaged in making the news, we may lack her gentle touch. You may enjoy reading the world according to Ken and Jim; you may hate it. We hope that at least some of the news that we present will open your eyes.

And we guarantee that you will not be bored. But: should you have a quibble with what we present, or how we present it, please tell us. One of the things that WHAMO does better than the W-H is respond to our readers. But FM has her plate full, what with taking the voice of the people to Lincoln and all that.

Don't get me wrong—

she has been a great help in the assembly of this issue, giving freely of her time, talent, and money, but she is not responsible for the content and style of this issue. After all, she will see most of this for the first time when she gets her copy in the mail at about the same time that you did.

Frances is not the only one who helped out. Many people contributed time and effort to this issue. Some of you may know Richard Chilton, our contributor from the Black Prairie Dog Woman Studios in Alma, Nebraska. His insights into the "Midlands Edition" of the World-Herald will be seen more often in WHAMO. A new voice this month is Isabel Cohen. Her insider's views of the conflict over the Jobbers' Canyon, and her desire to point out threats to the continuance of the human species will come in handy to us when future deadlines approach. Frank Duntze welcomed WHAMO into his home for the paste-up session(s), and his expertise with his Macintosh computer provided us with the headlines and many of the graphic touches.

You may notice as well that there is a dearth of typos in this issue. For that, and for her time at the keyboard, we owe Mary Heise a debt of gratitude that words cannot express. Sam Brady provided drop-off and delivery services to and from the printer, and helped with the nuts-and-bolts of

mailing the finished product out.

And of course we must not forget our illustrious illustrator, our indefatigable browbeater, our co-editor Ken Gray. He deserves some small part of the glory that comes with contributing to the American Tradition of the free and liberal press.

So now you know who put this issue out. When you read Ken's piece, you will discover some ways and reasons for you to see your name in this column, praising your contributions.

Some other matters that deserve mention: WHAMO will hold its garage sale on August 20, at the home of the Mercies (1701 S. 72nd Street). Donations for the sale are still needed. For more information, call Sister Tim O'Roark, 558-4129, evenings. The day following the garage sale, (August 21) WHAMO will host the first ever Alternative Press Chili Feed. Everyone reading this issue is invited — chili will be provided, as will some soft drinks. Feel free to bring a beverage, a salad, crackers...whatever. Several concerns of WHAMO will be discussed, and a good time will be had by all. The event will be held at the home of Ken Gray, 5523 Marcy Street, from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. For further info, or to RSVP, call Ken at 551-4702.

Letter to the Editors

Dear WHAMO:

I recently had the opportunity to read my first issue of WHAMO. It's great. Also, we really appreciate the article you ran on the Decker Coal Strike that has been taking place in southern Montana/northern Wyoming for the last ten months.

I am sorry to hear that the Kiewit Foundation left you off of their yearly gift list, so enclosed please find my donation. Also enclosed is an article published in the Sheridan, Wyoming Sheridan Press business section July 12, 1988.

The article describes the type of corporate greed our union has been battling since October 1, 1987. We are familiar with Donald Sturm and his millions, and we all know now how he started them.

Thanks.

Larry Deeds

UMWA Local 1972

[The article Mr. Deeds enclosed was an AP wire story about Mr. Sturm's agreement to pay the SEC some \$282,000 as part of a civil insider trading suit. Mr. Sturm is vice chairman of Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc. The article was published by the W-H July 14, on an inside page of the business section. ed.]

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☐ I want to receive the newsletter, and since I know the Kiewit Foundation didn't give you a grant this year, I'll help out with a donation.*

☐ I can't manage a large donation, but I promise to brag about WHAMO to all my friends; please send me the newsletter.

☐ Count me in for some donated labor.

☐ I want to monitor news about _____

☐ I know how to use Appleworks (or some other data base) and can help with the mailing list.

☐ I am pretty good at layout and production,

☐ I like to draw cartoons.

*Survival Outlook:

WHAMO needs to average \$20/yr. from all its members who are employed

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Credible Fantasy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

attorneys for the defendants, who would get paid even if they lost. The Magistrate pointed out that ConAgra's loss of money so far was also irrelevant.

An even larger headline on Thursday, July 14, 1988, "Park Access for Riverfront Called Good." A National Park Service official's testimony expressed concern about public access constantly during his questioning, but at the very end shrugged his shoulders and said, in a faltering, meek voice, he guessed it was good.

Headline on Friday, July 15, 1988 "Jobbers' Canyon Trial Comes to Abrupt Halt," implies the attorneys for the plaintiffs were totally surprised when the defendants' attorneys called no witnesses, when in fact, they knew that their witnesses had supplied enough testimony in cross-examination to satisfy the defendants' attorneys.

The World-Herald has never interviewed any of the plaintiffs' attorneys to get their side of things or to

try to find out what is going on, but have exclusively interviewed the attorneys on ConAgra's side.

The law is a respecter of no persons. In this case, the news media has tried diligently to distort the real facts. The way in which the defendants have circumvented the law is appalling. The historic implication of the buildings being preserved is not the issue in this case, but the blatant circumvention of the law.

This is not a judicial process as it should be, but a political process. The people of Omaha are not being served, only ConAgra, who is helping itself to whatever it desires at the public's expense. With all due respect, Mayor Bernie Simon wanted to leave his mark on Omaha, and ConAgra took full advantage.

Three crucial segments of the community are business, local government, and the arts. The balance is tenuous at best, but hopefully they all work together for the betterment of the community. Jobbers' Canyon is already on the National Register of Historic Places. The same business leaders that put it there are now financing its

destruction!

According to sources in the business community, many business people are angry because they were forced to give the money to the Omaha Development Foundation that they would normally allocate for the arts (and more). Governor Orr pushed LB 775 through the Legislature to keep ConAgra from going the way of Enron. This bill could spell financial disaster for our state before long.

Douglas County taxes going up? School taxes going up next year? The Riverfront Plan already \$1 million plus over budget? Cutbacks of city employees? Just the tip of the iceberg, folks. And where will the money be found? You guessed it. Before this project is done, it will touch all of us and not in a good way.

Here's what we get: no river view, a small park and lake under the interstate bridge, after five years no access to the lake for the people of Omaha, limited access to the park which will not be a park for the people but a front yard for ConAgra's campus-style setup. Sitting at the Toad (a popular tavern on the river side of the Old Market) what will you see to the east? ConAgra's

driveway. The natural progression of the Old Market is to the river--our vision for the past twenty years--but no more.

"I will not be passive again because I now know the Truth. One way or another passivity kills." I don't know who said that but I try to live by it. In Omaha there is so much passivity that sometimes I want to shake people so they will wake up! Once you tear down your history, you cannot restore it--it is gone forever. Just like the old Post Office and WOW Building. Because a man from Minnesota says Jobbers' Canyon is a "bunch of ugly red brick buildings" does not merit them being razed. One man's opinion does not an edict make and yet...

It has been said that power tends to corrupt and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Mike Harper's ego will not allow him to back down now. He's been handed too much and he knows he's got our city by the tail.

"The act of demolition is irrevocable. Consideration of alternative plans... is permanently foreclosed once the structures have been razed."

--Boston Waterfront Resident

W-H: Helmets Better Than Seat Belts

by JL

The W-H has repeatedly shown that they are not fond of motorcyclists, nor terribly respectful of their views. Last month, WHAMO printed a point of view on the helmet law that the Wierd Jerald has completely ignored (see Soft Skulls Like Helmet Laws) in their attempts to convince the public that helmet laws, like seatbelt laws, deserve to be in effect.

Their bias also shows in other ways. For example, their coverage of the motorcycle rally in Lincoln to protest the new law was forced to page six of the Sunday, July 24 edition. Not because of momentous happenings in the Omaha area, though -- for the W-H

found plenty of space for the screaming headline "Cyclist Dies on Way Home From Rally," with the tasteless subhead of "He Wasn't Wearing Helmet."

It was only after reading the story, which included the recent widow's answer to the tasteless question "Do you support helmet laws now that your husband died in a motorcycle accident?" (or, "Outside of that, Mrs. Lincoln, did you enjoy the play?"), that we learned that there had indeed been a peaceful, law-abiding gathering of motorcyclists in Lincoln. The following day, the W-H ran essentially the same story, featuring the recently dead motorcyclists,

and reports of their alleged (to borrow a W-H word) states of intoxication.

My question is this: why is it that when a motorist dies in an accident, unless s/he is an important person or the wreck is spectacular, that the story is run on the inside pages, and mention is rarely made of seatbelts, but when a motorcyclist dies, his helmet use or lack thereof is a subhead on page one for two successive days?



HAROLD, PETER, AND THE ARTS

Writer Richard Chilton and artist Margery Coffey, both of Black Prairie Dog Woman Studios of Alma, Nebraska, recently produced an art installation-exhibition inspired by the demolition of Jobbers' Canyon. "Coffey's Corporate Garden of Eden," featuring the work of Ms. Coffey, was shown at the Antiquarium Galleries in the Old Market, June 25 to July 10.

by Richard Chilton and Margery Coffey

The Omaha World-Herald, for all its faults, biases, and inconsistencies, is a paper whose editorial merit is perhaps not recognized nor acknowledged by its local readership. The paper is tightly edited, not with the potency of the Wall Street Journal, but with credible respect to its position of influence in the Midlands. The World-Herald perceives itself in a role similar to that claimed by the NY Times. In drawing upon source material gleaned from a wide variety of national dailies, the W-H presents, albeit in capsule form, a broader view of domestic, day-to-day news than its NY counterpart.

Still, like the NY Times, and much of the rest of the (presumably) influential media in this country, coverage of local issues is the most blatantly ignored--and therefore, the most vulnerable to consumer influence. How one transposes a lack of coverage into positive change at the W-H is a formidable yet not insurmountable task. WHAMO is clearly a catalyst in this regard, but not exclusive: the next step is to engage a broader base of serious discussion among the economic and cultural sectors of the extended local community, both within and without the Omaha-Council Bluffs area. Our experience with the W-H should help in understanding the need for this step.

COVERING ALMA

Historically, the Reppublican River Valley has been ignored by the political and economic centers of Lincoln and Omaha. In the last year, we have seen how our own activities here in Harlan County are viewed by W-H editors in their decisions to use Associated Press dispatches about our locality as filler material among the back pages of "Midlands" editions. So long as the Black Prairie Dog Woman Studio remained in South-Central Nebraska, the W-H could choose to report on us as a "novelty of the hinterlands;" but once we began entering the domain of the W-H proper--Omaha--the paper practically closed its doors to us.

GETTING COFFEY COVERED

For our most recent effort, "Coffey's Corporate Garden of Eden," we sent a press release and accompanying photocopy of previous clips not only through the traditional channels at the W-H, but also to all those staff writers we could identify who had covered either the art scene or Jobbers' Canyon (a total of 21)), inviting them to visit the show in either their professional capacity or as individuals. We followed this up the following week with a second release--again through traditional channels--featuring an interpretative poetry reading by the artist's sister, Marilyn Coffey, a national award-winning poet and published author. We notified the staff writers as well via an original postcard announcement, to soften the edge of our tenacious approach (one editor who would normally review such exhibitions remarked four times "on the amount of publicity circulating around here on your show" during my phone conversation with him; he nonetheless did not review the exhibit).

Our sole mention was among the "Gallery Listings" on the Art page of Sunday's Entertainment section, a

(presumably) free service offered to galleries who are conscientious enough, as our host the Antiquarium Galleries has been, to take advantage of this W-H "benevolence." Still, we had managed through careful scrutiny of: telephone directory listings, a Nebraska Arts Council "minority group" list, the "State of the Arts" directory published jointly in May by the Metropolitan and the Collaborative Arts Project, the mailing of 400 postcard announcements by our host gallery, in addition to placing an advertisement in a local weekly, as well as our own resources (including leafleting of Old Market) and word-of-mouth, to solicit 30 people to come downtown on a hot Sunday afternoon for the poetry reading. At the same time, we had "an incredible number of people walk up the stairs to see your show," Antiquarium Galleries director Al Strong told us upon the show's closing.

We conducted a similar "campaign" to other media outlets, groups and individuals, and this elicited enough response that an audience was created in Omaha despite the W-H's near-total silence.

We do not need the Omaha World-Herald in order to establish (or define) our presence as a creative force in the cultural life of Nebraska, or the greater "Midlands" region whom the W-H purportedly represents.

A LOOK AT JOSLYN'S BOARD

The Joslyn's own erratic managerial history over the last several years can be laid, in part, on the doorstep of the World-Herald. Publisher Harold Andersen sits on the Board of Governors, the reconstituted decision-making body for the museum, a group made up almost entirely of corporate leaders presumably chosen for their prowess in fund-raising. Mrs. Harold Andersen, Executive Editor G. Woodson Howe, and former W-H art director Allan Tubach hold positions on the advisory Board of Trustees.

A more indirect W-H connection on the Board of Governors includes Walter Scott, Jr., President and Chairman of Peter Kiewit Sons, Inc.; thus, of the ten members of this Board, two could presumably represent from one decision to the next the interests of the W-H. Furthermore, Charles M. Harper, Chairman of ConAgra, and Ms. Janice Stoney of US West Communications also hold places on the Board. Along with the W-H interests, these constitute half of the full Board of Governors' membership, having final authority over all decisions reached in the name of the museum.

If one were to include the Board of Trustees' memberships of Martin Colladay of ConAgra, the Jobbers' Canyon "connection" becomes the single largest bloc of both advisory and decision-making authority; its position and influence pertaining to the long-term direction of one of Nebraska's most important art institutions is equally powerful.

HAROLD, PETER, AND THE ARTS---CONTINUED.

No wonder the Joslyn cannot possibly respond to the vibrant and exciting exploration of art consistent with the "contemporary cultural vocabulary" now emerging in the Midlands. This is why Holly Solomon can lament there being very little possibility of achieving that which would be acceptable in an art historical reference, when viewing Joslyn's contemporary art. With the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees having overwhelming corporate representation, it is to be expected that the museum, rather than encouraging important young local and regional artists, would instead concentrate on traditional acquisitions and safe investments, such as the historically important but artistically inferior Alfred Miller collection--at \$4.4 million. No wonder the Joslyn needs to hide behind the Douglas County Board of Supervisors for the floating of tax-exempt bonds to facilitate the Museum's "financial integrity!"

CORPORATIONS AND "CULTURAL VOCABULARY"

Corporate definition of art has been a major obstacle to development of a broader, more fully representative "cultural vocabulary." Individual patrons and commissioned art still play a role in the creation of pieces drawn from the imagination of the artist, but corporate influence dominates. The seductive quality of this concentration of capital has an increasingly potent and inordinate influence in the art world. These market forces significantly narrow the scope or artistic vision offered as an expression of the human spirit through a systematic reduction of individual work into

speculative commodities suitable for patron, corporate, or museum portfolios (see "Art and Money," *Art in America*, July, 1988).

The W-H plays a direct role in manipulating the artistic and cultural definitions of what NY art gallery owner Holly Solomon, juror of the 20th Biennial exhibition of the Joslyn Aart Museum held in April of this year, terms a "contemporary cultural vocabulary (for) Omaha." "It is most apparent to me," Ms. Solomon wrote for the Biennial catalogue, "that these talented artists have little or no reference to the vocabulary of contemporary art and therefore very little possibility of achieving work which would be considered acceptable in an art historical reference" (emphasis added)."

The World-Herald's role in the financial, commercial, and real estate markets of Omaha, as well as its political, cultural, and social influence upon Nebraska, in addition to its dominance as the major print medium of the Midlands, bears much more serious reflection and scrutiny than mere monitoring of filed dispatches. WHAMO would do well to document this aspect directly.

HELP!

By Ken Gray

I want your money.

Checks, pocket change, crumpled dollar bills...at this point, I'll even take coupons. Why? Because this newspaper is broke. As things stand, WHAMO cannot even cover its printing costs, let alone the postage required to mail all of you a copy.

That's why I'm coming to you, our readers, asking for money: because WHAMO doesn't have any. Barely enough to put this issue together; nowhere near enough to get next month's issue out.

WHAMO needs your help. You don't get anything for free, friends. Not even the so-called "Free Press." A lot of you have been getting this paper without paying for a long, long time. Not providing a subscription fee, not donating time, or talent, or assistance in any way. To be blunt, it's time for that to stop.

The World-Herald, a "serious" publication, wouldn't let you get away with it. And now WHAMO will not allow it either. A lot of people work a lot of hours to bring you each issue: writing, editing, drawing infantile cartoons, taking the thing to the printer. All of these people have regular jobs... other commitments... families, even. The time that they devote to this paper is time taken away from all of their other obligations. It's time that they have to

budget -- even steal.

And they don't get paid for it. WHAMO is run on donated work. Volunteers, every last one of them. No one gets paid a dime. Why does everyone work so hard? Well, they're a little wierd. They have a vision, an idea, a dream. And they're willing to work as hard as they have to, in order to fulfill this dream.

A free press. Alternative viewpoints given equal time, unrestricted by monopoly. Fair coverage to every issue, every problem, every aspect of every situation. A chance for people who aren't generally heard to get their point of view out to the public. In print.

On top of all their work, I don't think it's fair to also expect them to pay for the issue you requested. To pay for the issue you're reading now. They did, you know.

If you gave up your free time, trying to provide a service that many people claim to appreciate, you wouldn't want to lose money doing it, would you? You'd want to at least break even, right?

That's all I'm asking, folks. The idealists around here may be a little too shy to beg for money. I'm not. I just want enough money to break even. Enough money to pay for the printing and mailing of each issue. Later on, I'm hoping to defray a lot of those costs with advertising and increased subscriptions. But for now, I need your help--our meat and potatoes readership. We bring out

this paper to you, for you, and we need your help to continue doing it.

WHAMO needs your money. If you honestly can't give us money, we also need other forms of support. Got something on your mind? Got an issue to present? An opinion, an idea, a rumor? As long as you have some way to substantiate your claims, let us know. We might even print it.

Did you see JFK in line at 7-11? Jimmy Hoffa at Lake Manawa? Are there strange lights in the night sky? Well, to be honest, you might as well keep those stories to yourself. We all know about "Them," the people who control the world, and all their conspiracies and plots. And we are just as afraid of pissing Them off as you are. So we'll let Elvis stay dead, and we won't be running byzantine conspiracy stories.

BUT. If you find yourself just sitting around, flipping through the cable channels hoping for some tits or carnage, reading the same old magazines, calling the same old boring friends...maybe you could donate some of your time to us. Writing, editing, typing, sweeping up after the staff leopard, paste-up, distribution, whatever your talent, I am sure that a place could be found for you.

After all, they found a place for me.

Anything that you could do, friends, would be greatly appreciated, and will be a mark in your favor when the revolution finally comes and the establishment

Editors' Letters

By KG

Most of the sweat behind this issue of WHAMO comes from Jim Leatherwood's brow. I am not about to denigrate the contributions of our writers and artists, but the dirtiest job on any paper is editing, folks. And this issue was edited by Jim. He's the one who made the articles fit to read, and fit them on the page.

It's not a fun job. Everyone thinks that their words are sacred, no one wants anything cut or changed. And when it comes down to the wire, everyone blames the editor for the mistakes in the finished product. Editors usually work behind the scenes, and as a result, they get far too little credit. I just want to make sure that you people give Jim the credit he deserves.

Although I'm listed as co-editor for this issue, my time was spent more in consideration of WHAMO's future than in dealing with its present.

As you may notice, this paper is changing. Management, editorial style, what have you. Mr. Leatherwood and I are going to stay on for a while as an editorial team, and we have quite a few plans for WHAMO.

I'm going to concentrate my efforts on expanding out horizons. Putting some actual money into the paper, perhaps by soliciting advertising, perhaps by soliciting sponsorship, perhaps by just plain solic-

iting. The point is, WHAMO needs money before we can do anything with it. And getting that money is my first priority.

We'd also like to widen the focus of the thing. Rather than restrict ourselves to monitoring the attitudes of the World-Herald, we'd like to look at the entire local media spectrum, to dedicate our efforts to presenting alternative points of view. Stories, issues, any information that people might need or want to know, regardless of where we find it or where it's aimed.

Between the monolithic constipation of the W-H and the soporific local tele-news, the mainstream is pretty well covered, folks. We'd like to peer between the cracks, lift some rocks, dig up a little dirt — and maybe do the occasional good deed (this paper's origins will not be forgotten).

Elsewhere in this issue, I suggest ways for you to help, gentle readers. At this point, I'd like to suggest reasons why you should help us. Think. Hasn't there ever been something you read or saw that you didn't like, or couldn't understand? A feeling or opinion you held which you could not express?

If you help us improve and expand WHAMO, you will have the opportunity to express those thoughts. You will have the representation for all the social issues and side-bar topics which the big boys studiously ignore.

Supporting WHAMO at this point is supporting your own voice, your option to be heard. It may sound a little corny, but we're absolutely sincere. We're getting serious, folks.

The Cost of Corporate Blackmail

Reprinted from the Center For Rural Affairs newsletter July 1988.

The Nebraska Department of Revenue now predicts that the corporate tax giveaways passed by the 1987 Legislature in response to ConAgra's pressure tactics will cost the state 20 million dollars in the 1989-90 fiscal year. That is five times the amount that the Department and Governor Orr told Nebraskans they would pay to appease ConAgra at the time the legislation was passed. Moderate income Nebraska citizens are now picking up the tab by paying higher individual income taxes.

The adjusted price tag may come as no surprise to the readers of this newsletter, but it was information withheld from Nebraskans who depended on the editorial pages of the Omaha World Herald to follow the debate over LB 775. At that time, Lincoln consultant Don Macke published a study predicting the \$20 million price tag. The Center for Rural Affairs prepared a guest opinion piece quoting Macke's estimate and submitted it to the World Herald for publication. World Herald editorial page editor Frank Partsch refused to print the piece, charging that the Macke study it quoted lacked credibility.

The Revenue Department's revised cost estimates reveal that Macke was on target and that the absence of credibility is with the editorial policies of the Omaha World Herald. The World Herald censored information it found threatening to its own position, while wrapping itself in the banner of "Free Press - Free People."



I MADE A LOT
OF MONEY
LAST YEAR.



I THOUGHT
I'D LIVE LIKE
A KING!



...OR AT LEAST
LIKE
DONALD TRUMP.



BUT I ENDED
UP PAYING
MORE TAXES
THAN EXXON.



THIS YEAR IS
GONNA BE
EVEN MORE
PROFITABLE!



AND I'M
READY!



I JUST
INCORPORATED
MYSELF.



One concern on the docket is the name of our publication. While WHAMO has a long and distinguished history as a name for Omaha's counter-press, the editors feel that in keeping with the changes already underway here, a new name might be appropriate. In the next issue, we will announce a contest, with real prizes (or a prize, anyway), for the best name.

The Unspoken Costs of Development

Richard Chilton, of Alma, Nebraska, is a local correspondent for the Hastings Tribune.

Economic development, whether pursued within an urban or rural context, has been of vital concern to both the ancient and modern worlds.

Today 'development' means less the breaking of 'new sod' and more, the revitalization of the underlying economic essentials that keep a society functioning. The problems of economic change are not so much their immediate short-term effects, but rather the long-term dislocation of the status quo in light of the necessity of change.

If the social fabric of a community is an amalgamation of disparate families, then tangible connection with and perpetuation of their heritage becomes a guiding force for the future. Our daily rituals utilize the new icons of technology more than the symbols of tradition, but neither offers an easy way out of the dilemma we now face as the prevailing species on the planet.

National Facade

The American experience has been premised on abrupt physical change. Coast to coast, from the Canadian to the Mexican borders, the pressures of economic development have transformed communities almost as much as Union torches changed Atlanta and Richmond near the end of the Civil War.

With the exception of portions of Wall Street's Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel near New York's City Hall, the sole surviving structure of pre-Revolutionary War days below Canal Street is Fraunces Tavern - site of

Washington's Farewell Address to his officers in December, 1783. A few isolated buildings of pre-1830 construction are sprinkled throughout the rest of Manhattan, but as is well known, scores of magnificent structures of later years, most notably Pennsylvania Station and the old NY Times building on Longacre (now Times) Square are, if not gone, hopelessly disfigured. Even Carnegie and Radio City Music Halls have recently risked demolition or renaming.

City Development

Omaha came to prominence because of its proximity to the Missouri River, and it became the eastern terminus of the Transcontinental Railway. Geography continues to dominate the growth and development of the city.

Jobber's Canyon, which is now rapidly becoming a former District on the National Register of Historic Places, has been beselged for the last 20 years by local leaders of commerce who have used all the political influence at their disposal to impress upon city administrations the 'importance' of economic redevelopment of this riverfront area.

The emergence of the Old Market into one of Omaha's top tourist attractions went a long way toward regaining a sense of the town's soul. Translation of a city's spiritual essence into renewed financial vigor through 'partnership' revitalization by both the private and public sectors has been a driving force behind projects of commission (recycling) and omission (destruction). Restoration of San Francisco's Ghiradelli Square, Los Angeles' Heritage Plaza, Lincoln's Haymarket, and Chicago North are prime examples

of visionary reuse of old structures. Other successful projects of both renovation and new construction include Baltimore's Harbour Waterfront and New York's South Street Seaport.

Although private groups have long been at the forefront of historic preservation, only within the last generation have programs on federal, state and local levels begun actively designating sites of historical significance. Within that time, the pace has quickened. There have been many more potential sites that have been lost to the wrecker's ball than preserved. Even such designation does not always stop the 'march of progress,' as the demise of Jobber's Canyon has shown.

A sense of 'urban renewal' - 1960's style - is presently occurring beyond the Jobber's Canyon site, as destruction proceeds indiscriminately. Apparently, Omaha's 'City Fathers' simply do not want any existing structures to remain. The unspoken costs of development often far outweigh the temporary desires or 'needs' of corporate and government officials. Despite regulations of environmental impact and community involvement, the inertia of 'progress' can strip the human spirit of its most enduring qualities. The aura, even myths, of our 'traditions' have locked us into subjugation of the earth, its resources, its varied plant and animal life, to attain heights of material and intellectual achievement. The cost of all this, added to the damage already done to the planet, may well be a condemnation of ourselves to untold human suffering.

Sense of Loss

Loss for the Future

Within the scheme of things, the loss of Jobber's Canyon and its surrounding environs seems of little consequence, but its destruction nonetheless assures Omaha's future as a city of minor importance in the midwest's changing economy. For the short-term gain of acceding to the corporate designs of US West and Con Agra, the 'City Fathers' may have dealt a mortal blow to such long-term diversification as recommended by the varying reports on Nebraska's future that have been released over the past year.

A look from Capital Hill toward the highrises of downtown may mask the number of empty store fronts in the central business district, but the dozens of open parking lots that will never see new construction are testament to our failure as a culture to perceive our relationship to the land. In being one of the last and largest such riverfront warehouse districts left in the country, the loss of Jobber's Canyon becomes tragic not just for Omaha, or even Nebraska, but for the nation. If it were not that so many of the world's great treasures are being lost to greed and stupidity, then the lamentations for Jobber's Canyon would be heard on an international scale.



LAW AND DISORDER

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a regular contributor
to this newspaper.

The World Herald editorial board, by virtue of its product, gives every evidence, in my opinion, of collectively hewing to an ideological perspective Alley Oop, and Conan, would have found reassuring. The editorials unshipped by the W-H bang the drum in the same place, measure, volume and march (to the Right). That is, when commenting on relevant topics; they have a bizarre habit of, when events of importance are transpiring every nanosecond, relapsing, as though events had gotten away from them and they needed some sort of pastoral, into pieces such as the one that appeared during the political hubbub of the Democratic National Convention: It noted the reports of wildlife (foxes, coyotes, etc.) entering the environs of Los Angeles, and then went on to observe (of all the silly things to exercise parochial defensiveness about!) that Omaha too is regularly visited by deer, and other furred and feathered denizens of forest and field. How ineffably, well, Nice.

Still, for the present, I would like to agree with the W-H and commend them for their position. (Are you with me, Woody?).

'Three-Time Loser's Tale Reflects System's Failure' (Monday, 25 July, lead editorial, remarking on the Clarence Victor case) The writer takes the standard conservative "dim view" of the various elements of the judicial system: A system which, when presented with a guilty party (on the face of it deserving a life sentence, or the hot seat), through plea bargaining and other tinkering with "the system" by the variously well-intended but misguided, allows a

first-degree murderer to serve just five years, for a reduced charge of second-degree murder. In the W-H's example, they present the standard validation of the system's "folly": another homicide, at the hands of the criminal who got plea bargained down to manslaughter, then got almost half his sentence forgiven for "good behavior".

In 1976, Clarence Victor was charged with first-degree murder in the killing of Jerry Black, a twenty-four old neighbor. "She was found in her home with her throat slashed."

Another plea bargain; Victor pled guilty to a charge of second-degree murder, and was sentenced to 20 years.

He served but ten of these years; although the State Parole Board had twice denied him parole, he had accumulated enough time off for good behavior to qualify for early release.

What did this paragon of good behavior do, within two years of his second release? Again, from the W-H editorial: "Last December, a relative found the body of Alyce Singleton, 82, on the floor of her kitchen. She had been beaten and stabbed. The investigation led officers to Clarence Victor, and the County Attorney filed first-degree murder charges against him. This time, there was no plea bargain." The jury found Victor guilty of first-degree murder; he awaits sentence, which must either be life in prison or death in the electric chair.

The editorial points out that, although Victor would seem to have been a poor choice for early release a second time, prison officials had no choice; the law specifies

reductions in sentence for "good behavior".

Well, okay then **Just what is this "good behavior" of Victor's, that ultimately got two women killed?** (I grant that keeping this misanthrope in prison a few more years, after each of his first two convictions, probably wouldn't have kept him from mayhem for more than the length of the extra sentence served, but the path down the road of "What If" is not remotely visible from here. Maybe some fellow inmate would have stuck a fork in his heart. Ya never know.)

It's the paradox of human behavior at work. The very elements of Victor's personality that make him so well-behaved in prison make him such a menace when in the community. He must have a highly structured, and dictated, environment; within such, where he need not make decisions of greater significance than when to hit the toilet, or which teeth to brush, he is a positive pussy cat. Let him loose, with the deadly craziness within (think of this guy as a mini-Manson), and people die.

Good behavior in one time and place, faced with a given set of life events and challenges, does not equal good behavior in a different time and place, faced with a different set of such events and challenges. (More than once, we have discovered the banality of Evil, and evil-doers; such people are not that different from us, and the conditions necessary to bring out the Worst in us are less rare than we would hope.) Good behavior in prison does not make for good behavior in the community, and is a lousy criterion, by itself, for early

release. Legislatures which inviolably mandate such "good behavior" sentence reductions are dabbling in a science of universally applicable predictive psychology which just doesn't exist.

The Nebraska Legislature should remove from the law any blanket authorization of sentence reductions, and return this power to the criminal justice system. If a parole board, with appropriate review, finds an individual undeserving of early release, that is how matters should be. Early parolees will continue to commit crimes, no doubt. But the burden of proof needs to be on the criminal, not on society. This is not a good answer, just the best we can do right now. Let's keep looking for better predictors of future criminality. But let's not make ourselves the guilty party, for the offense of locking up those who have demonstrated the capacity to violence, and freeing them only when satisfied they present no more of a danger than does anyone else in the community.

This ought not to be an issue where conservatives and liberals take entrenched positions. "Law and Order" has long been a "conservative issue"; it seems like sometimes liberals, and the Left, have taken contrary positions, or kept silent, just to be sure they stayed on the other side. They should rest assured that the conservative view of what constitutes Law & Order, and how best for society to obtain these valuable commodities, is as pin-headedly pass-ackwards as on other great issues. There will be plenty to disagree about.

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